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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9158

INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2094

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5568

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9164

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6742

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4551

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2545

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000390

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP, IO, AND CA/OCS/ACS/EAP; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/24/2019

TAGS: [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: REGIME NEWS CONFERENCE IMPLIES USG
INVOLVEMENT IN YETTAW VISITS TO ASSK

REF: RANGOON 381 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Officer Sean K. O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Summary

¶1. (SBU) On June 25, Chief of Police (and Deputy Minister of Home Affairs) Brigadier General Khin Yi held an hour long briefing for the press and diplomatic corps regarding American Citizen John Yettaw. For over 40 minutes, Khin Yi described in detail the GOB's version of events surrounding Yettaw's May visit to the home of Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) as well as Yettaw's prior travel and biography. Khin Yi stated that foreigners may have been behind Yettaw's actions, and implied (but did not articulate) that the United States Government was involved. He did not explain why the GOB held the press conference now or what effect this is intended to have on the Yettaw or ASSK trials. Khin Yi took several questions from the assembled Burmese press and diplomatic corps, but provided little substantive information beyond his prepared statement. End Summary.

Out of the Blue

¶2. (SBU) On June 25, Chief of Police Brigadier General Khin Yi held a briefing for the press and diplomatic corps regarding American Citizen John Yettaw. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially informed the diplomatic corps that the police would hold the briefing approximately four hours before it began at 2:00 p.m. At least one media contact received word last night, and informed us, that the Police would hold a media conference today.

¶3. (U) For approximately 40 minutes, Khin Yi - reading from a prepared statement - provided a detailed account of the GOB's version of events surrounding Yettaw's May visit to ASSK's home, his prior travels to Burma and Thailand, and his biography. Police also displayed the items allegedly found in Yettaw's possession as well as a number of photographs of and taken by Yettaw. While the vast majority of the briefing was devoted to Yettaw, Khin Yi took a moment during his presentation to reiterate the GOB's allegation that ASSK

failed to cooperate with the police, as was her duty. Nearly all of the information Khin Yi provided has been previously reported in state media.

The Conspiracy Theory

¶4. (SBU) Khin Yi said it is likely foreign persons or organizations were "behind the curtain," supporting Yettaw's actions, a possibility that requires additional investigation. He clearly implied (but did not articulate) that the United States Government was involved. During the depiction of Yettaw's May 2009 visit to ASSK's property, Khin Yi specified that Yettaw entered the lake "near the U.S. Embassy" and was caught "just 30 yards from the U.S. Charge's residence." Later, in response to a (likely staged) question by a Burmese reporter regarding who may have supported Yettaw, Khin Yi said he could not say for now, but pointedly reminded the audience that Yettaw is a U.S. citizen and had ample money to make multiple expensive trips between the U.S. and South East Asia, despite his meager personal finances. The presentation claimed that Yettaw met with Burmese opposition activists in Thailand before traveling to Burma, an assertion supported by photographs purportedly showing Yettaw with Burmese members of the Thailand-based human rights group Assistance Association of Political Prisoners (AAPP).

Comment

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¶5. (C) Khin Yi provided no explanation for the timing of the briefing/press conference today, on such short notice, with the trials scheduled to resume tomorrow, and with a Supreme Court appeal by ASSK lawyers still pending . It seems evident, though, that the GOB now wants to imply that the USG was involved in Yettaw's actions. Whether the regime actually believes that, despite USG clear denials, is anybody's guess. But invoking an "American conspiracy" theory fits neatly into the regime's longstanding paranoia of foreign meddling and its propaganda that ASSK and her Western supporters are up to no good. If asked, we intend to reiterate Washington's clear and accurate denial of any USG involvement in Yettaw's actions. End Comment.

DINGER